



Dwight Baldwin MD

1798 – 1886

by Hawaii Medical Association
Auxiliary

Dwight Baldwin was born at Durham, Connecticut, on September 29, 1798, the son of Seth and Rhoda (Hull) Baldwin. His first two years of college work were done at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and from there he went to Yale from which he graduated in 1821. From 1821 to 1824 he taught school in Kingston and Catskill, New York, and in 1824 he began the study of medicine while teaching at Durham, New York. Dropping the study of medicine in 1826, he entered the Auburn Theological Seminary, graduating in 1829.

As a minister young Baldwin volunteered to join the Fourth Missionary Company being made up to go to Hawaii, but the demand for doctors outweighed the need for ministers, so he returned to Harvard in 1828-1829 and attended a course of medical lectures. However, he did not have time to wait for his official medical diploma and, at the advice of the Prudential Committee of the Mission Board, accepted a diploma as Master of Science. In the years to come, Dr. Baldwin's lack of a medical diploma was to cause him great embarrassment. Although he was obviously as well qualified as any of his professional peers and practiced for some 27 years, the Hawaii Medical Society refused to grant him a license until he could produce documentary proof of a medical degree. In 1859 he belatedly received word from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire that they had granted him an honorary medical degree.

Dr. Baldwin married Charlotte Fowler at Northford, Connecticut, on December 3, 1830. On December 28 the young couple sailed from New Bedford, Massachusetts, as members of the Fourth Missionary Company. After a voyage of 161 days aboard the "New England", they arrived in Honolulu on June 7, 1831.

For the first six months the Baldwins were stationed at Honolulu, and on November 26, 1831, their first child, David Dwight, was born. Seven other children were born to the doctor and his wife: Abigail Charlotte (Mrs. William D. Alexander), Mary Clark, Charles Fowler, Douglas Hoapili, Henry Perrine, Emily Sophronia (Mrs. William O. Atwater), and Harriet Melinda (Mrs. Samuel M. Damon). Mary and Douglas died in early childhood.

In January, 1832, the Baldwins were assigned to Waimea, Hawaii, where they remained until February, 1835, when the family moved to Lahaina, Maui, hopeful that the drier climate there would prove beneficial to the throat ailment troubling Dr. Baldwin. When the change brought little improvement, the doctor took a trip to the Society Islands. He was gone for six months, returning in September, 1836, completely cured.

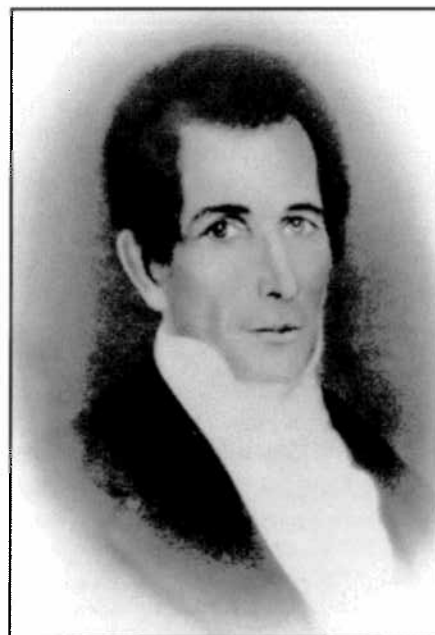
During his years at Lahaina Dr. Baldwin preached every Sunday in Hawaiian at the Wainee Church and often preaching assignments took him to other parts of Maui. He supervised all the church schools (numbering 22 in 1849) and was instrumental in building a seaman's

chapel. During the smallpox epidemic of 1853 Dr. Baldwin worked so effectively that out of a total of 10,000 deaths in the Islands, there were only 250 fatal cases on Maui. In an attempt to cure the cases of leprosy which he treated on Maui, he became intensely interested in the disease and experimented with many types of drugs. He was also an advocate of all movements to diminish the sale and use of liquor and tobacco, and was the author of an essay on the subject which won a prize offered in the United States. Somehow the doctor found time for agricultural and horticultural experiments and was a charter member of the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society when it was organized in 1850.

In 1856 Dr. and Mrs. Baldwin revisited New England, going by way of Cape Horn and returning on January 8, 1858, via the Panama Canal. The doctor also made a trip to the Marquesas in 1862 as a mission delegate.

Forced to resign in September, 1868, due to paralysis, Dr. Baldwin moved to Honolulu in 1870 and he and Mrs. Baldwin made their home with their daughter, Abigail. In spite of his disability, the doctor taught at the native Theological School in Honolulu from 1872 to 1877.

On January 3, 1886, Dr. Baldwin died in Honolulu at the age of 87. Mrs. Baldwin predeceased him on October 2, 1873.



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Sketch: Baldwin, Dwight. A-858. Physicians File.
Mamiya Medical Heritage Center, Hawaii Medical Library.